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ence. His greatest opinion was that delivered in the case of *Texas vs. White*, which determined the status of the Southern states during the war. "The Constitution," he said, "in all its provisions looks to an indestructible union composed of indestructible states." Hence the acts of the seceding legislature were null, but although the obligations of Texas were not impaired, its federal relations were affected and under the power to guarantee to every state a republican form of government, Congress had the right to provide for reconstruction. The decision was not only sound in law, but wise in statesmanship, if statesmanship ought ever to play a part in the decisions of the Supreme Court. From the discussions in Mr. Hart's volume, one would suppose that the judges were often actuated by purely political considerations. This they would hardly be willing to admit, nor is it probably true to the extent which seems to be implied. At the same time the political bias is very strong with all of us, even when we are unconscious of it.

In the *Veazie Bank* case, Chase as Chief Justice upheld his own course as Secretary in regard to the ten per cent. tax on state bank notes, yet in the legal-tender cases he was great enough to discard consistency and to declare his own former acts illegal, by holding that the Constitution had not authorized the issue of notes which should be a legal tender for debts contracted before the statute was passed.

After this decision two new judges were appointed by Grant and in the *Latham* case the decision was reconsidered and overruled by a bare majority of the court. However great the temporary convenience of this second adjudication, the time may yet come when our republic will realize how dangerous it was to declare constitutional a law authorizing an issue of irredeemable paper currency as a legal tender for past debts.

Mr. Hart insists that next to Lincoln, Chase was the most eminent statesman in the important periods of the war and reconstruction; that he was a greater man than Stanton, Seward, Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, or Charles Francis Adams. Probably this is true. Each of these men had serious limitations and our country has great reason for congratulation that during its stormiest period they were under the leadership of one who possessed more eminent qualities than any of them. Yet Chase is certainly a less interesting and attractive personality than several of the others. His character lacks many of those picturesque features which brighten the pages of biography.

Mr. Hart, both in his narrative and in his criticism, has displayed in the highest degree his impartiality as well as fidelity to the truth of history. His work will always be an authority.

WM. DUDLEY FOULKE.

The Life and Times of Hannibal Hamlin. By his Grandson, CHARLES EUGENE HAMLIN. (Cambridge: Printed for the Author at the Riverside Press. 1899. Pp. xi, 627.)

FOR a successful "life and times" of any one, there are two prerequisites—an important central figure and a skilful writer. Both are

lacking in the present case. Persons interested in the political history of Maine during the half-century after 1835 may find compensation for reading this narrative, but as far as national affairs are concerned there is surprisingly little that is either new or valuable. No one with a correct conception of historical proportions would have given serious thought to writing a biography of Hamlin more than one-fourth or one-fifth the size of the present volume. Hannibal Hamlin was a straight-forward politician possessing sound judgment and substantial abilities; he was a good man, a rugged character, and an excellent example; but that he was great or brilliant or very influential, has never yet been made clear. His rise to a conspicuous position was due to peculiar circumstances.

In his early years he figured and succeeded in Maine as a Jackson Democrat. In 1843 he was elected by the Democrats as a representative in Congress (p. 51). In 1848 he was advanced to the Senate to fill a vacancy, and in 1851 he was chosen for a full term. About equally distant from Free-Soilism and pro-slavery Democracy, he was a good exponent of the opinion of his party constituents. So when Douglas, in 1854, led in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, Hamlin did not follow, nor did he subscribe to the heroic "Appeal of the Independent Democrats," but safely voted with the opposition—and continued to be a Democrat for two years after the commencement of the formation of the Republican party.

There was a strong suggestion of gifts for politics in the time and manner of his moving bag and baggage from the Democratic to the Republican ranks. This was not until a few days after the Democratic national convention of 1856. Then he rose in the Senate and said:

"During nine years of service in the Senate, I have preferred rather to be a working than a talking member, and so I have been almost a silent one. On the subjects which have so much agitated the country, senators know that I have rarely uttered a word. . . . I believed it [the repeal of the Missouri Compromise] wrong then; I can see that wrong lying broadcast all around us now. As a wrong I opposed that measure—not indeed by my voice, but with consistent and steady and uniform votes. . . . I did it also cheerfully, in compliance with the instructions of the legislature of Maine, which were passed by a vote almost unanimous. In the House of Representatives of Maine, consisting of 151 members, only six, I think, dissented; and in the Senate, consisting of 31 members, only one member non-concurred" (p. 287).

These sentences leave very little to the imagination, and do not indicate any surprising independence. Yet it meant a great deal politically when Hamlin thereupon declared his separation from the Democratic party and his allegiance to its new rival. The biographer calls Hamlin "a father of the Republican party." Considering the circumstances, it would be more accurate to call him her step-son. But the Maine senator, whose term was about to expire, understood the conditions. He was soon nominated as the Republican candidate for the governorship. His election followed; and in the same week when he assumed his new office,

he was chosen for another term in the Senate, where he returned March 4, 1857, as a Republican, without having lost any time and with greatly increased political importance. These moves made him the most prominent of the Republicans with Democratic antecedents.

When, in 1860, the Republicans, contrary to general expectations, nominated Lincoln, a Westerner of Whig antecedents, it was important to choose an Easterner belonging to the Democratic wing of the party. Hamlin was the most available of the aspirants of the time and was soon agreed upon. If Seward had been given the first place, some Westerner or border-state man, such as Cassius M. Clay, would have been the candidate for the vice-presidency. Hamlin presided over the Senate with dignity and good judgment, and kept up close relations with Lincoln, but his influence upon the measures of the war-period is hardly appreciable in comparison with the work of such senators as Sumner and Trumbull.

Naturally the grandson writes feelingly about the failure to renominate Hamlin in 1864, but he ought not to regard it as a personal matter. As a vice-president has hardly any opportunity to gain popularity in office, and is therefore almost certain to lose what he had, political expediency is likely to cause him to be supplanted by some one that can attract new support to the ticket. The presidency of Johnson was such a national calamity, that there has always been a lively regret that Hamlin was dropped. Undoubtedly Lincoln personally favored Hamlin, but he saw the force of the suggestion that a Southern Unionist with Democratic antecedents would help to shield the Republicans from the charge of caring more for the negro than for the Constitution. When in 1891 Colonel A. K. McClure publicly stated that Johnson had been chosen in obedience to instructions from Lincoln, it created a great sensation. There has been a vast amount of quibbling and posing in regard to this question, and what the present author says does not help much; but the long statement from Colonel Nicolay, quoted in the supplement, must be regarded as final, and is historically the most valuable part of the book.

After retiring from the vice-presidency Hamlin became collector of the port of Boston. But when Johnson came into violent disagreement with Congress in 1866, Hamlin dramatically resigned a very lucrative office, and soon began to work for re-election to the Senate. He was so successful that he obtained two more terms, from 1869 to 1881. During this period he maintained his position of honorable mediocrity. His chief distinction was that he had been the first Republican vice-president and Lincoln's associate. His sympathies in the Reconstruction period were with the radicals, the spoilsmen and the expansionists, and he felt an intense dislike for the soothing influences introduced by President Hayes. Two of the best things he ever did were, when chairman of the Senate committee on foreign affairs, to support the principle of arbitration by insisting that the United States were morally bound to accept the unwelcome award of the Halifax Commission of 1878 (p. 538), and to argue with great force that the rights of China under the Burlingame

treaty should be respected as carefully as if our government were dealing with the first of European powers (p. 540). In 1881 he was appointed minister to Spain with the understanding that he might spend part of his time in travel and resign after one year.

This volume settles for all time that Hamlin spent a long life among great men, but that he was not of them. And the painful expanse of the narrative, with its exaggerated metaphors, political slang and too frequent quoting of *damns*, and worse, remind one of the remark of the countryman when his friend, Franklin Pierce, was nominated for the presidency: "Frank's a dern big man up here in Noo Hampshire; but I guess when they come to spread him out over the hull country, he'll be poorly thin in places."

Contemporaries. By THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. 1899. Pp. 379.)

FROM the name of its writer, it goes without saying that this book will be found delightful reading. But it is more than this. It will have to be reckoned with by future students of the literary, poetic, social, reformatory, perhaps even military history of the period it covers. The word military is thrown in with a perhaps, solely for the reason that the volume contains but one estimate of a soldier, General Grant; but this done in so masterly a way as to draw an authentic portrait worthy to be hung up where it will long be seen.

One great difficulty students of past history encounter is that of getting at vivid details of the salient characteristics of the eminent men or women they are trying to understand, details given by a contemporary with an eye in his head, as well also as with a breadth of appreciation, an insight, a sense of humor, and a loving charity that will furnish a genuinely human portraiture. Such eyes are rare features in the heads of writers of memoirs. Too often are their memorial optics so short-sighted, long-sighted, astigmatic, or asquint, as to render their pictures hardly more reliable than those of a landscape seen through a boggling lens of bull's-eye glass. Col. Higginson, on the contrary, has a widely sympathetic nature, and is the last man to say, "Because thou art virtuous, shall there be no more cakes and ale?" which means that he can at once enjoy the stern Spartan rigidity and unbolted moral bran diet of a William Lloyd Garrison and the exquisite sense of irresponsibility and bobolink insouciance of a John Holmes.

Perhaps the majority of the portraits Col. Higginson paints are those of men and women identified with the "Abolition Movement." "Well, what sort of everyday personalities were they?" will ask many a student in the future. Let him, for example, turn to the portrait of Lydia Maria Child and he will find out—be startled, moreover, at the same time, with an insight into New England, its plain people, their struggles and aspirations, that will make things actualities to him. This is the only way to light up history. The abolition agitation was no mere breaking of lances